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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**H. Ray Higgins Named CFO of Bright from the Start:
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning**

ATLANTA, Ga., (June 7, 2011) – Commissioner Bobby Cagle announced that H. Ray Higgins has been named the new Chief Financial Officer for Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (Bright from the Start). He will assume this role June 16, 2011. As CFO, Higgins will oversee the department’s annual budget of \$513 million.

“I look forward to incorporating Ray’s expertise into this agency,” said Commissioner Cagle. “He brings a wealth of strong financial and budgetary experience that will help us continue to offer high-quality services to Georgia’s children and their families.”

Higgins has been employed with the State of Georgia for more than 12 years with service in all three branches of government. He started his career as a budget analyst for the Georgia General Assembly before receiving a promotion to work as a fiscal officer within the Judicial Branch. Higgins later joined the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. He was quickly promoted to fiscal officer and treasurer, performing as the agency’s chief financial officer. During this time, Higgins also completed the Professional Management Program associated with Columbus State University.

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Higgins left the GBI to become the deputy director and chief operating officer of the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia. He managed the primary operations for pension administration. Prior to joining Bright from the Start, he worked as the director of governmental affairs for the Georgia Department of Driver Services. His duties included working first hand with the Governor's office, the Legislature, and key staff.

A graduate of Dacula High School, Higgins received an A.B.A from Reinhardt College where he was recognized for excellent achievement. Later, he earned a B.B.A in Finance from Georgia Southern University, which included an internship at Merrill Lynch. Upon graduation, he enrolled at Georgia State University, gaining a M.S. in Finance with a specialization in investments.

Higgins is a past president of the Georgia Fiscal Management Council. He has been recognized for customer service and his efforts in agency success throughout his career.

Higgins and his wife Chelsie, and their son currently reside in his hometown of Dacula, Georgia.

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Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages the voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.